

## Teacher Education in South Sudan: Mapping the Ideological and Theoretical Vacuum

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**Article History**

Received: 08.02.2018

Accepted: 15.02.2018

Published: 30.03.2018



**Abstract:** This article seeks to render problematic the ideological underpinnings and theoretical conceptions, or lack thereof, of teacher education in the education system of the Republic of South Sudan. It uses the emergent perspective to question the construction of the country's Teacher Persona as envisioned in the legal and policy frameworks such as the General Education Act 2012 and the National General Education Policy (2017-2027). The Government sees these instruments as an essential catalyst to professionalize teaching and attract candidates of high calibre to the teaching profession using the political model as an offshoot of its paternalist and utilitarian national ideology to control and guarantee the quality of the teacher education enterprise. The political model, however, needs the generative practice of the institutional model and the replicative feature of the professional model to provide structure, stability and continuity to teacher education in South Sudan. This is particularly so given the fact that the current theoretical approach to teacher education at the curriculum level is informed by technical rationalist inclinations that essentially favour a strong behaviourist payload, a split of theory and practice, and a disconnect between training institutes and universities. In the same vein, the study points out that the greatest disservice to teacher education in South Sudan in terms of school outcomes has been the structural disconnect between the existing school curriculum and teacher education curriculum, critically failing to capture and engage the official standpoint of valid knowledge drawn upon to teach students in schools. A proper way of developing a national framework for teacher education is to state what good teachers effectively know, do and value. There is a need, therefore, for a new transformative model of teacher education that offers an idealistic, ethical thrust (character) and a specialist, exclusive power (competence) to future South Sudan's Teacher Persona, equipped with enquiry as its signature feature and as an antidote to a reductionist view. In that lies the promise to place premium in the country's education system.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, National Ideology, Theoretical Framework, Transformative Model, Teacher Persona, Vacuum.

### INTRODUCTION

This article renders problematic the ideological underpinnings and theoretical conceptions, or lack thereof, of teacher education in the education system of the Republic of South Sudan. Teacher Education refers to the "policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the school and classroom" as well as wider educational leadership [1].

The Council of Ministers<sup>i</sup> in its Regular Meeting No. 01/2018 held on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018 approved a new 10-year National General Education Policy (2017-2027) to combat illiteracy, empower girl children in schools, instil patriotism, affirm national

unity and press for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal No. 4. The NGEP (2017-2027) underscores the need for a new teacher education model. This paper thus delves into the ideological bearing and theoretical "construction of the teacher being envisioned" in this policy document as well as in the General Education Act 2012 [2].

*This conceptual study is the first of its kind to attempt an examination of the realities of teacher education in South Sudan from the perspective of national ideology and theoretical model. It is hoped that the study will contribute to understanding the situation obtaining on the ground in terms of prospects for teacher education and continuous professional development on the one hand; and advocacy for the*

recognition and protection of teachers' rights, fair working conditions and adequate wages and benefits on the other hand. "There are no strong traditions for educational action research in [South Sudan], especially not in the form of teacher research" [3]. In fact, there is a lack of critique of current trends of general educational practice except for a streak of gray literature periodically published by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and other agencies. Even so, those studies mainly use institutional analysis frameworks that do not lend themselves to a conceptual depth of ideological import. For all intents and purposes, South Sudan is the youngest in the concert of nations and has had a turbulent past characterized by prolonged political oppression and grotesque destitution [4].

Teacher education enormously affects both teacher quality and identity. Present-day debates on the direction of education in South Sudan are increasingly critical of the prevailing ways of teaching in public schools; and calls are being made from different quarters for a shift to more creative, responsive, collaborative and reflective teacher education. The country's quest for teachers who are "an embodiment of a constant search for updated knowledge" is tied up with its efforts to set the appropriate "indices of developments in the society" [5].

The Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) sees Teacher Education as an essential catalyst to any envisaged shift "towards new working cultures and to lay the foundations for teachers' capacity to adapt to changing contexts and circumstances. It is ideally positioned to play a key role in achieving two key goals: improving the development of teaching practices; and, attracting more high quality candidates to the teaching profession" [6]. A vibrant national framework for Teacher Education guards against disincentives to teachers' professional development by constantly reminding policymakers and practitioners that teaching is not an art form or a static craft.

In contexts such as South Sudan where teaching is not seen as dynamic, engaging and rewarding, "teaching is unlikely to be attractive to ambitious and high calibre candidates, which is becoming a significant problem in an increasing number of education systems" [6].

In terms of structure, this paper is divided into methods of study, teacher education context in South

Sudan, discussion of ideological and theoretical workings of the teaching enterprise and concluding remarks pertaining to the ramifications thereof.

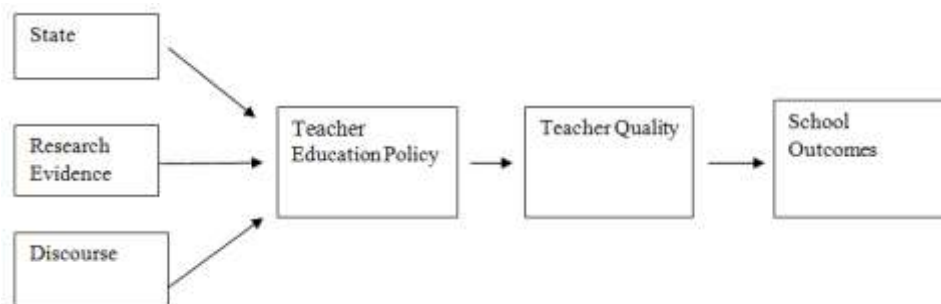
## METHODS OF STUDY

This study is undertaken using desk review of published research followed by an in-depth conceptual analysis of the actual ideological and theoretical wall against which teacher education in South Sudan is leaning. The study uses the *emergent perspective* which is sustained by three important premises about teacher education as an enterprise: "[Teacher Education] is constructed as a *public policy problem*, based on *research and evidence* and driven by *outcomes*" [7].

This perspective argues that new teacher education models are built on "a multidisciplinary theoretical framework, which assumes that in addition to operating at the intersections of research, policy and practice, teacher education can be understood as a social, ideological, rhetorical and political practice" [7].

First, as a *public policy problem*, teacher education is discussed and accepted as an avenue for addressing teacher shortage to meet the learning needs of school children in developing countries. Policy-makers' are attentive to a renewed "faith in state and federal policy as the key to solving the problem of teacher education; the desire (at least rhetorical) to establish policy based on sound research; and the inclusion of policy as a major part of the discourse within the teacher education community itself" [7].

Second, teacher education as *research evidence* is an attribute of the movement bent on promoting standards deemed effective in grounding teaching and its derivatives in sound empirical evidence. This, however, does not preclude the importance of basing decisions about teacher education on other pragmatic considerations such as values, resources, priorities, tradeoffs and commitments [7]. Third, the emergent teacher education view is that of *outcomes* that assume preparing teachers include a sine qua non of policies and practices that guarantee student achievement. This has come to be normal in present-day teacher education parlance. "Providers of teacher education are struggling to demonstrate, document, and measure the effects, results, consequences of teacher preparation on school and other outcomes" [7].



**Fig-1: The Emergent Perspective of Teacher Education**  
Cochran-Smith [7]

### Teacher Education in South Sudan: Context

The nascent education system of South Sudan is a post-conflict outcrop of nation-building following the country's Independence from Sudan in July 2011. Barely recovering from the ravages of decades of civil wars, the system is downright stretched in terms of learning space and facilities, cost of schooling per child, status of overage learners, shortage of competent and motivated teacher force, and poor learning outcomes for children.

South Sudan "ranks second lowest at 44% out of 123 countries on net enrolment rates for primary education, and bottom of the global league for gender parity in primary education" [4]. The General Education Act of 2012 (GEA) provides for free and compulsory primary education; but the country's meagre resources have not been able to offset the massive demand for access as legally mandated. The South Sudan Development Plan (2011-2013), crafted as a post-independence recovery plan, had expectedly missed the target of raising Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) from 46% to 63% for primary schools and the same for secondary schools from a paltry 4% to 8% by 2013 [4].

The same recovery plan was to cater for employing some 23, 400 teachers for primary education and 1, 400 teachers to staff secondary schools across the country. This envisaged surge in teacher numbers was meant to draw down to 1: 50 the desperately high Qualified Teacher-Pupil Ratio (QTPR) of 1:117. That, too, had failed miserably [4]. "There is little coherence between the number of teachers and the number of pupils at the school level, calling the teacher allocation process into question" [8].

In fact, available teacher hands on deck for primary schools are only at 39% of actual enrolment levels; while 61% of teachers deployed are able to match actual enrolment numbers for secondary schools. Teacher deployment for pre-primary level fared at 27% of actual pupil numbers and that of Alternative Education Systems (AES) which caters to huge numbers of over-aged learners in non-formal settings stood at just 22% [9]. It is essentially a question of a patchy supply pool of potential teachers than it is one of the teacher allocation process [10].

**Table-1: Teacher Characteristics by Sector, 2015**

| Particulars                  | Pre-Primary | Primary | Secondary | AES*  |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------|-----------|-------|
| Number of teachers           | 3,148       | 28,957  | 3,569     | 5,237 |
| Number in government schools | 937         | 19,858  | 1,939     | 3,637 |
| % in government schools      | 30%         | 69%     | 54%       | 69%   |
| % Permanent Teachers         | 64%         | 59%     | 73%       | 60%   |
| % Female Teachers            | 53%         | 14%     | 11%       | 12%   |
| % Qualified Teachers         | 48%         | 38%     | 38%       | 46%   |

\*Figures for AES may also include teachers drawn from primary schools.  
UNESCO-IIEP & MoGEI [9]

The above tabulated material conditions of teachers in South Sudan are a grave challenge to its education system. The anecdotal evidence points to a low stock of the teacher force. "Currently, there are few numbers of teachers, many are under-qualified, poorly compensated; they lack effective management and supervision, and are often late or absent" [11]. Their pay scale mainly features low grades and has not increased for even once since 2007; just as promotions have not been equally forthcoming for the last ten years.

It is stating the obvious, therefore, that the teaching profession has been shunned by high quality cadres [9]. Nobody in their "right mind" would easily choose to teach in South Sudan. "Teacher dissatisfaction is a major concern in the [South Sudanese] education system and is associated with teacher absenteeism" [8]. The consequence is clear: there is little chance of improving schooling in terms of equity and efficiency [10].

**Table-2: Public Unit Costs by Level of Education, 2013/2014**

| Levels      | Recurrent Expenditure 2013/14 (SSP)* | Enrolment 2013 | Cost Per Student (SSP) | Unit Cost                             |                        |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
|             |                                      |                |                        | As a Proportion of GDP Per Capita (%) | Multiple of Primary UC |
| Pre-Primary | 1,158                                | 27,775         | 42                     | 1%                                    | 0.2                    |
| Primary     | 250,243                              | 957,301        | 261                    | 7%                                    | 1.0                    |
| AES         | 15,757                               | 130,192        | 121                    | 3%                                    | 0.5                    |
| Secondary   | 41,488                               | 28,849         | 1,438                  | 39%                                   | 5.5                    |
| TTIs*       | 4,514                                | 163            | 27,693                 | 746%                                  | 105.9                  |
| TVET        | 1,028                                | 3,050          | 337                    | 9%                                    | 1.3                    |
| Tertiary    | 112, 041                             | 16,000         | 7,003                  | 189%                                  | 26.8                   |

\*TTIs (Teacher Training Institutes)

\*SSP (South Sudanese Pounds in Millions)

UNESCO-IIEP &amp; MoGEI [9]

The trend in government budget allocation for education is a downward spiral, calling into question “the priority the government places on education” [8]. Teacher education in South Sudan sits at the bottom of the education reform agenda despite heightened rhetoric to the contrary. For example, in spite of 2009 being designated Year of the Teacher as an affirmation of “developing education through the judicious investment in teachers,” little has been done in initial teacher education, continuing training and the teaching career (USAID, 2013: 8). Most in-service training consists of a series of workshops that have short duration and are more unlikely to be followed up rigorously with refresher sessions or actual teacher support. No continuing professional development follows formal pre-service training.

A study conducted by USAID in 2009 noted that the sector’s policy with regard to teacher professional development was unregulated and served “as an emergency stopgap measure to address particular challenges, without addressing large-scale issues in a systematic way” [12]. Those “large-scale issues” can be summarized as the absence of a continuum of teacher education right from selection, training, certification, deployment, continuity and end of career.

Any move in this respect would probably have seen a closer scrutiny of the current structure of training, its rationale, curriculum and information systems, framework for teacher career regulations and incentives, prospects for continuing professional development and national resources committed to back up policy pronouncements on teacher education.

South Sudan’s five Public Universities each runs a College of Education<sup>iii</sup> that trains teachers mainly for secondary schools; offering Bachelors of Education (B.Ed) in four years and a two-year Master’s Degree (mainly M.A.) in Specialisation Subjects. The first ever Master of Education (M.Ed) programme was started in late 2015 at University of Juba in conjunction with Indiana University, U.S.A; strongly accentuating Education in Emergencies. There are no teacher

education institutions providing professional training for streams like vocational education, early childhood development, physical education and alternative education systems (AES). Besides, extremely weak links between the teacher education institutions and in-service local education centres mean that there is little support and supervision for teachers in active service and no prospects for opportunities to adapt and hone their skills through continuing professional development. The Government has been pursuing a dual strategy of boosting the output of graduates from Colleges of Education and other Teacher Training Institutes; and providing in-service training to “upgrade and certify [unqualified/under qualified teachers] in reducing the share of [unqualified /under qualified] teachers in government schools” [8]. This dual push has yielded little results. South Sudan has continued to stagger from a deficit of teacher force. The shortfall is both physical and institutional. As the Ministry notes, “there is currently no national policy on teacher training & certification-in short, there is no nationally recognized and enforced definition of a qualified teacher” [11].

Following its study on the status of teacher professional development in South Sudan, the USAID embarked on a three-year programme, SSTEP, to address some of the policy and technical issues raised in the report. It explicitly set out to devise policies and systems of management for basic education, build up and consolidate teacher support systems and enhance gender equity in the education system. The programme would develop National Teacher Policy Framework, Teacher Certification Policy, Teacher Support Network Policy, and National Affirmative Action on Gender.

Thus, the policy challenge has always been about developing “policy instruments that link goals to the provision of inputs, the development of institutions and national financing strategies and involvement of all education stakeholders including parents” [4].

South Sudan needs a new transformative teacher education model to help it overcome the current

hurdles on its educational scene. The first hurdle is the rural-urban gap whereby 6.9 million citizens of the country live in rural areas compared to just 1.4 million in urban settings, according to 2008 Census [13, 4]. The second impediment is the poor English language proficiency obtaining in the country's school system. A great number of South Sudan's competent teachers are proficient only in Arabic; necessitating a longer and arduous phase-out process as English language takes hold in the education system [4]. The third obstacle is an equally abysmal student achievement due to a low baseline of qualified teachers (only 45% are considered qualified and 40% of the teaching force is made up of primary school-leavers); and a female teacher percentage slice that doesn't exceed 15% at primary and secondary levels [11, 4].

Research shows that under-investment in teacher education is an unforgivable sacrilege by any stretch of imagination, particularly so for a nation like South Sudan that is rising from the rubble of a devastating, 21-year civil war. The country can only neglect teachers at its own peril as 51% of its population is made up of young people under 18 [4]. Large-scale research surveys on factors determining learning outcomes for students have pressed home the clear message that "the quality of teachers has a larger impact on the learning of pupils than the quality of the curriculum, the teaching methods, the school buildings or the role of parents" [14].

## DISCUSSION

It is right and proper, therefore, to turn to the emergent perspective to problematize South Sudan's official view and conceptualisation of teacher education in the light of the above contextual glimpse into the fortunes of school teachers in the world's youngest nation.

### Teacher Education as a Public Policy Problem

It is clear from the preceding section that South Sudan's education system badly needs an inrush of more teachers in a short time; and time is of the essence. The government is under pressure to address this problem from the perspective of public policy based on solid research, at least rhetorically. But it surely is not going to admit just "anyone who breathes regularly into the teaching ranks!" [15].

The government must have its ideological basis on which to construct South Sudan's teacher persona for the first time in the country's short history. Without a clear ideological underpinning, South Sudan's teacher education enterprise will definitely suffer from confusion which could undo the "ultimate political reform" of the Government [16]. It is noteworthy that the country has an oppressive past to return to for "corrective reorientation" or "ideological repositioning" [17, 18] by trying to concretize and prioritize its political stroke of liberation [18]. So, for a

start, South Sudan's education system needs a political statement of the normative and generative image of the society it wants to construct [19]. That statement is what I refer to as a national ideology which should as a matter of necessity capture the teacher persona or the idealized form of the teacher needed to construct that society.

Section No. 8, Article 1 (Items f, n & e) of the General Education Act 2012 assigns Ministry of General Education & Instruction [11] the role to "develop policies and set national standards for teacher recruitment, training and deployment; provide training for teachers of national secondary schools and national teacher training institutions which are managed by the Ministry;.....and curriculum development, publication and provision of advice on teaching materials" [20].

But what is the basis of the national policies and standards for teacher education? In other words, what is South Sudan's national ideology with regard to teacher education? A national ideology is "a set of values and beliefs that frames the practical thinking and agents of the main institutions of a nation-state at a given point in time" [2]. The general impression one gets is that the question of what ideology informs national action on teachers has long been taken for granted by the revolutionaries who came to power by virtue of the 2005 peace deal.

The irony is that their supposed revolutionary zeal to drastically overhaul the social system has not registered any significant note in the case of what teacher character South Sudan would need. There was a feeling among the revolutionaries that their presence in power alone would do the trick! In politics, though, you can have domination without power-the power to change and not just leave matters to chance. Aija [21] contends that political systems do essentially control and influence the content and methodology of education as well as the conditions governing teacher education. It remains to be seen what kind of extraction is South Sudan's political system in terms of its sensibilities about teacher education [19].

It took the Ministry six years after Independence in 2011 to arrive at a semblance of a national ideology for its education system: "to transform each learner to become a good citizen, who is patriotic and proud of his or her rich culture and heritage; active participants in society for the good of themselves and others; committed to unity, democracy, human rights, gender equity, peace and reconciliation and ready to take their place as global citizens" [22].

That political statement is generic and lacks focus and depth when it comes to "how" that "good citizen" can be constructed. You know the tip of the spearhead is blunt when there is no mention of humanism as core to the country's quest for good



citizenship. Very often politicians and policy-makers in South Sudan take the country's declared creed of secularism to be the magic bullet for reform. Nothing could be further from the truth. South Sudan is steeped in conflict: it breathes, eats and drinks conflict. Its ethnic particularities and political insecurities make for a perfect storm of a nation at risk all the time. The secular character of education is not the only ingredient it needs to force its vision of change into the riverbed of stability and prosperity. It needs much more than rhetorical "secular education". The country needs a compensatory thrust. Given its deeply divided people, South Sudan is in need of a radical humanistic, civic culture so as to reshape its national identity. "Such a humanistic approach is based on principles of respect for life, human dignity, cultural diversity and social justice<sup>iv</sup>" [23]. That means its education system and teacher education enterprise will have to lead the charge. The question is whether the political leadership is willing to relinquish its "unquestioning endorsement of the status quo" [24].

There are three main factors that heavily weigh in favor of a particular ideological approach to teacher education in South Sudan at present. First, policy-makers in the country have openly lamented the sorry state of teacher education, often directly "chastising and degrading teachers" for failing schoolchildren [15]. This open criticism triggers calls for stringent measures to "curb" teacher underperformance and indiscipline. Second, the government intends to "properly" produce new teachers who could carry out its national agenda for school education in South Sudan. This view is more

likely to underscore the need for a prescriptive practice [25].

Third, the National General Education Policy (2017-2027) has been designed and approved during a devastating civil war that has been raging since 2013. A civil war is likely to break out when a country has a crisis of national unity. In the case of South Sudan, the NGE (2017-2027) explicitly calls for upholding national unity and promoting patriotism at a time when these core national ideals are at the centre of the ongoing internal conflict. The problem with teacher education during times of conflict is that it tends to be "closely regulated" and generally promotes "the ruling order's worldview in teacher education and further on into the classroom, often resulting in teachers who feel powerless and afraid" [21].

Thus, the ruling order in South Sudan has deployed the NGE (2017-2027) as an exercise of its political power in addressing teacher education as a public policy problem. In light of the above three factors and judging from the accent of the GEA 2012 and NGE (2017-2027), South Sudan's national ideology with regard to teacher education is the political model, grounded in paternalism and utilitarianism.

The political model is undergirded by the state strongly controlling the teacher education enterprise to guarantee what it sees as quality teacher preparation for the country's school education [25]. This model is justified on the grounds of the "need to safeguard the quality of the education system", among others [24].

**Table-3: Envisaging Common Policy Directions for Teacher Quality**

| General Objectives      | Policy Objectives   | Areas in Need of Targeting and Articulation |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Improve teacher quality | Attract the right kind of teachers into the profession                  | Traditional models of teacher education     |
|                         |   | Alternative models of teacher education     |
|                         | Give them the right tools   | Content-knowledge, pedagogical skills       |
|                         |   | Practical field experience                  |
|                         | Assure that they stay competent throughout their entire teaching career | Initial teacher education                   |
|                         |   | Continuing training                         |

Musset [26]

The political model is likely to be more influential in government-owned or National Teacher Training Institutes (NTTIs) where the norm is generally to strictly comply with regulations and standards handed down from the centre in Juba, South Sudan's capital city. However, the government's political model is unlikely to be a standalone ideological statement given the inherent need for complementary models and the presence of other teacher education providers in the country who pursue a shifting mix of innovative models.

There are private providers of teacher training in South Sudan who are mainly engaged in a replicative exercise of socialising and inducting primary school teachers into the profession at shorter intervals than the Colleges of Education in the country's Public Universities. These Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) count on the expertise of veteran teachers in what is known as the professional model of teacher education. Their model is evolving through an interface with the government's model whereby scope of work is continuously negotiated and appropriated [25].

There is a third model of the ideological basis for teacher education in South Sudan: the institutional model. This is another side of the government's political model but a more nuanced one in which Public Universities enjoy more autonomy in controlling their Teacher Education Programmes<sup>v</sup> (TEPs) but under the gaze of the central government. "The locus of responsibility for determining the content of the programmes rests with the individual institutions" while the government ideologically contends with "setting parameters for programmes" [25]. At present there is no precedent of government parameter-setting. So, the institutional model is partly lop-sided although it remains the preferred mode of operation for the Public Universities.

What kind of a teacher do these models produce? That is a hard question because there is no short answer. The institutional model is theoretically more likely to yield better results for South Sudan's quest for constructing its teacher persona. The reason is simple: it is an essentially generative practice "in which enquiry (and therefore knowledge production) is a defining feature of the teaching profession" [25]. But it cannot do without the prescriptive reach of the political model and the replicative feature of the professional model which are both needed to provide structure, stability and continuity to the enterprise of teacher education in South Sudan.

It is in this context that a desired teacher persona can be meaningfully envisaged. The National General Education Policy (2017-2027) falls short of articulating this niche. It fails to capture the nuances of the prescriptive-replicative-generative continuum in modelling teacher education on the scale of a national ideology. This policy shortcoming can be attributed to the policy-makers' lack of adequate political and ideological clarity. By political clarity is meant the policy-makers' ability to fully appreciate the intricate links between macro-level socio-economic variables and the micro-level classroom implications of their teacher policy for different cohorts of learners and categories of teachers [27]. Conversely speaking, ideological clarity stands for policy-makers' ability to negotiate a teacher education policy that takes stock of existing belief systems that may "uncritically reflect those of the dominant society and thus maintain unequal and unacceptable conditions that so many students experience on a daily basis" [27].

This would normally have triggered cautious and articulate explanations of the teacher persona in terms of its connection to the way teachers see themselves vis-a-vis the contestation about the knowledge base for teacher education that the policy-makers of the NGEF (2017-2027) badly want to see coming out clearly in the assumed role of the school teacher [15]. While it has served the policy-makers right to craft their teacher policy within the current

socio-political context, it would be absurd to expect teachers and teacher educators to solely pursue a prescriptive or replicative model that doesn't lend itself to enquiry. That is, what nobody wants is a teacher persona that serves a reductionist view of the teaching-learning process which renders teaching as a semi-profession with virtually little or no need for research-trained teachers who are reflective practitioners [28, 14].

For example, while the Act in Chapter IX, Section 31 clearly stipulates that "the Ministry and the State Ministries of Education shall ensure that there is no political indoctrination in schools"; and warns sternly that "Teachers or Learners who engage in ethnic, tribal and partisan political activities contrary to the Law shall be subject to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with this Act", *it does not spell out how teachers can identify and rectify those harmful misdeeds* [20]. In other words, the teacher is placed on the receiving end of the consequences of engaging in political indoctrination but not positioned by law to play the role of a Social Reconstructionist in the likelihood of these occurrences.

Notwithstanding its legal proclivity to be punitive, the General Education Act 2012 entertains a reductionist view of the role South Sudanese teachers can play in deterring social regression by keeping teachers at arm's length. This suggests a political culture that sees schooling as strongly paternalist and utilitarian; downplaying the emancipatory dimension of teachers' assumed role. That is a coup de grace to the fortunes of teacher education in South Sudan.

It is so because a paternalist educational thinking shows that the Government is keen to "restrict the choices of individual citizens [such as teachers here] in their own interests and without their consent....The notion is that those in positions of power have the right and obligation to overrule the preferences of those deemed incapable of knowing their true interests<sup>vi</sup>" [29].

As shown by the provisions of the Act under the circumstances of political indoctrination, there is contempt for the teacher from the paternalistic and utilitarian perspective. This is totally opposed to social reconstructionism which gives teachers greater responsibility in engaging high stakes decisions such as politically indoctrinating their children. The social reconstructionist tradition is a proactive tool to undercut passivity in the face of social factors affecting the purpose of education such as *political indoctrination*. It helps teachers to critique prevailing political and social order of things in *relation to education* and the *purposes of schooling*. Teacher education is undertaken from the angle of making society more equal and empowered [30].

As Kincheloe [15] aptly puts it, teachers and teacher educators “know too much to be seduced by the sirens of political neutrality”. Given the above sober realities of the bearing of the GEA 2012, NGEF (2017-2027) and other similar policy instruments, there is a need to review and redress the envisioned construction of teacher in South Sudan’s education system. The prevailing political narrative, as shown above, offers an avenue to tasting this unpalatable “policy soup” [2].

In a line, South Sudan’s education system needs “rigorously educated teachers with an awareness of the complexities of educational practice and an understanding of and commitment to a socially just, democratic notion of schooling<sup>viii</sup>” [15]. The country’s Teacher Persona has to be of this weight. An envisaged Malaysian model of teacher education calls for developing teachers “who are noble in character, progressive and scientific in outlook, committed to upholding the aspirations of the nation, cherish the national cultural heritage and continually strive towards holistic, balanced and integrated development of the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual potentials of individuals” [13]. These two examples of a teacher character could be good starting points for articulating a national ideological grounding for South Sudan’s Teacher Education. Once there is a persona in place, the corresponding teacher education model will be arrived at with ease.

A final point to underscore in this sub-section is the fact that any such proposed national ideology for teacher education in South Sudan will operate in a wider ideological context where teaching as a scholarly pursuit is interpreted distinctly by different schools of thought. Again, using the emergent perspective, three ideologies are of the essence here. First, the welfare state ideology has an obvious practical appeal to South Sudan given the country’s poor development indicators in the post-conflict setting of nation-building.

On all counts, South Sudan is a welfare state, ideologically pursuing state intervention through which the government seeks to provide social welfare in the form of free education among others [3]. This is captured lucidly in Chapter II (Principles of General Education System), Article (a) of the General Education Act 2012: “Primary education shall be free and compulsory to all citizens in South Sudan without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, and ethnicity, health status including HIV/AIDS, gender or disability” [20]. The NGEF (2017-2027) is on target with a reminder to produce “a successful life-long learner” as welfarists urge [22].

Second, the neoliberal ideology is there to reckon with, too. The neoliberal ideology as the prevailing global mantra for economic growth has pervaded local contexts, to the chagrin of welfarists. It recognizes the value of human capital development as

critical to a nation’s competitive edge in the global market-place. This notion of free market and free enterprise calls for a minimalist state in the face of “private businesses competing against each other” resulting in the “greatest good for each individual”. Schooling is seen as building a global capital of students measured against the skills they have acquired [3].

This notion clashes with the welfarist sentiment of “free for all”. Article (l) of Chapter II of the Act underscores South Sudan’s adept recognition of this trend: “To establish a globally accepted standard of education to promote skills and development” [22]. The NGEF (2017-2027) equally captures this nuance when it notes that the education system of South Sudan aims to “produce a creative, innovative, confident and productive individual, who is enterprising and a creative problem-solver....” [22].

Third, the green ideology has come from behind to claim the attention of policy-makers as nations grapple with the advent of climate change and its implications for sustainable development in this day and age. This third ideology is about striking a balance between the imperative for growth and caring for the planet. Article (k) of Chapter II of the Act stipulates that South Sudan should, as a matter of principle, pursue an education system that “promotes healthy living, community health awareness and environmental awareness” [20]. The NGEF (2017-2027) reaffirms this stance and calls for producing “an environmentally-responsible member of the South Sudanese society....” [22].

These triple ideologies form the background against which the foreground performance of a new teacher education model rests. The terrain of national ideology informing teacher education is, therefore, a tricky one. There are two striking features at work here. Locally, South Sudan exhibits all indicators of a paternalist bent in its welfare approach to education as a social policy. Globally, to a large extent, education policy reform “is moving in the direction of establishing rigorous academic frameworks for the school curriculum, setting performance standards for students, and using high stakes testing to motivate students to learn the curriculum and teachers to teach it” [31]. This is a sweeping attribute of the neoliberal ideology.

It is important, therefore, that South Sudan’s education policy-makers (and ideally educators) expediently consider a teacher persona that resonates with clarity, relevance and excellence in the face of any eventual oscillation between the *local* and *global*. They must prepare teachers and teacher educators who can “aggressively name and interrogate potentially harmful ideologies and practices in the schools and classrooms where they work” [27]. The policy-makers must stay this course even when the guiding political ideology



gyrates and does not “appear in any uniform or clean form” [18].

### Teacher Education as Standards

We have mapped out the ideological void of teacher education in South Sudan by looking at the teaching enterprise as a public policy problem. Now, let us turn to teacher education as an attribute of *standards* so as to bring out the theoretical rift as well.

The structure and organization of teacher education in South Sudan can be described as a two-fold theoretical concept. At the *systemic level*, teacher education is multi-dimensional and seen as mainly generalist for primary schools and specialist for secondary schools. At the *curriculum level*, teacher education is negotiated along the lines of what is worth teaching and how this should be taught in South Sudanese school education. These two levels of theoretical visualization have been responsible for explaining the imperative to equip teachers with subject content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of educational contexts, goals and values, in anticipation of their decisive role in transforming classroom situations where learning takes place [32].

Concerns have persisted about the quality of the South Sudanese school teacher; prompting calls for “more strict and explicit definitions of the minimum standards that teachers have to meet and the knowledge base they must be able to use” [14]. These concerns are engraved on the granite of the General Education Act 2012. Specifically, Chapter VIII, Section No. 22 (Minimum Quality standards for Recruitment of Teachers), outlines:

“(1) Teachers who teach in pre-school shall possess a South Sudan Secondary School Certificate or its equivalent from a recognized teacher training institution. (2) Teachers who teach in primary school shall possess a South Sudan Secondary School Certificate or its equivalent or Diploma and a teaching qualification from a recognized teacher training institute. (3) Teachers who teach at secondary level shall possess Bachelor Degrees or equivalent in Education or a Bachelors Degree in another discipline and a teaching qualification from a recognized teacher training institution (4) Depending on the level at which they will be assigned to teach, and the complexity of the subject, teachers who teach in adult education level; shall meet the minimum requirement stipulated in subsection (a) ii and iii above” [20].

According to the Act, the Ministry shall come up with national professional standards to guide the process of training and retaining school teachers. To that end, the Ministry should set up South Sudan Institutes of Education (SSIE) to professionalize teaching [20]. Thus, professionalization<sup>viii</sup> is seen as the answer to the mishaps of teachers in the system.

As a distinct category of occupational work, the teaching profession in South Sudan has long lost its shine. It is arguable, therefore, that the General Education Act 2012 deliberately uses the phrase “professional standards” to evoke “the prestige and status of the teacher” of the good old days. This throws open the question of “whether the concept of teacher professionalism is considered in the Act as an indication of the status quo or as an ideal concept that is worthwhile to strive for” [14].

Furthermore, the Act is calling for an accountability process by explicitly underlining quality assurance in teacher preparation. It can thus be said that the Act is one step ahead in promoting two main discourses: the discourse of *professionalism and quality* and the discourse of *managerialism/performativity*<sup>ix</sup>. The former is pursued openly as in the text of the Act while the latter is implied [33].

At any rate, this drive is being championed by policy-makers, not educators per se; raising fears of “de-professionalization and technicisation of teaching” [28]. For example, the policy design in the National General Education Policy (2017-2027) favours a course of action aimed at a technical rational framework in which the discourse on professionalization of teaching in South Sudan is at present the discourse of “commonsense” [33]. This is apparent in the contradictions the NGE (2017-2027) encapsulates in stating that secondary school teachers should hold B.Ed while at the same time calling for the establishment of a 3-year Diploma program for the same cohort ostensibly to bring NTTIs into the orbit of Public Universities. This is a direct outcome of a flawed thinking driven in essence by a “technical rationalist” leaning. True to its name, the debate put forward by the technical-rationalists revolves around a linear view of the teacher problem as consisting in lack of controls and standards to produce the desired results. Thus, the remedy would be to “control all the players (teachers, in particular) so that the desired outcome (professionalism) can be achieved” [33].

This discourse is the one that has cemented the legislation and policy positions in the case of teacher education in South Sudan. At some future date, the dust will settle and policy-makers and educators will have to revisit the claims of the prevailing discourse. The commonsense discourse will soon run out of steam beyond the shoreline of “complaints” and “exhortations”. This is simply because it is more of an educational rhetoric than an educational practice in terms of impact [31].

An alternative (stand-by) discourse will have to kick in to steer the ship clear of obscurities. That future discourse will be a “strategic manoeuvring”, aimed at questioning government attempts to de-professionalize and demoralize teachers [33, 24]. But

for now, the commonsense discourse will feed on “complaints about teachers, as they should lack professionalism and elude governmental control, which need to be compensated by stronger bureaucracy, government regulations and management control” [14].

So, the current theoretical approach to teacher education at the curriculum level is informed by the technical rationalist tendencies that essentially favour a stronger behaviourist payload and a split of theory and practice [13]. This is evident in the existing Diploma of Education (D.Ed) and Bachelors of Education (B.Ed) programmes that train student teachers in sociology, psychology, history and philosophy [28]. But the theoretical rift is not lost entirely in the raging commonsense discourse on teacher education in South Sudan. Globally, there has been a shift from product-economy to knowledge-economy with teacher education shedding off the platonic or rationalistic approach in favour of an inquiry-based practice [13].

South Sudan’s teacher education model in the text of the National General Education Policy (2017-2027) should have captured this shift and channelled its focus on an integrated and trans-disciplinary approach with a progressivist and reconstructivist philosophy of education that fosters constructivist learning theories<sup>x</sup>. Enquiry must be the defining feature of the teaching enterprise or else reductionism will take its place. If pursued diligently, the resulting professionalization will achieve an idealistic, ethical thrust (character) and a specialist, exclusive power (competence) for the South Sudanese school teacher [14].

### Teacher Education as Outcomes

The third and final strand of the emergent perspective presents teacher education as an attribute of *outcomes*; meaning that the impact of teacher preparation programmes should be seen in measurable school outcomes.

Batra [34] situates the relationship between educating teachers and practicing classroom pedagogy within a context of educational change. That context has two facets to it. The first is the current neoliberal context of framing global policy discourse in terms of national competitiveness<sup>xi</sup>, resulting in greater control over how schools deliver and reframing teacher education along the discourse of effectiveness and efficiency.

Thus, a new regime of business-led management has taken over. The most direct implication of this disposition is that the equity-driven consensus about school education is overshadowed by a finance-driven one [34]. We have dealt with this earlier in the sub-section on ideology.

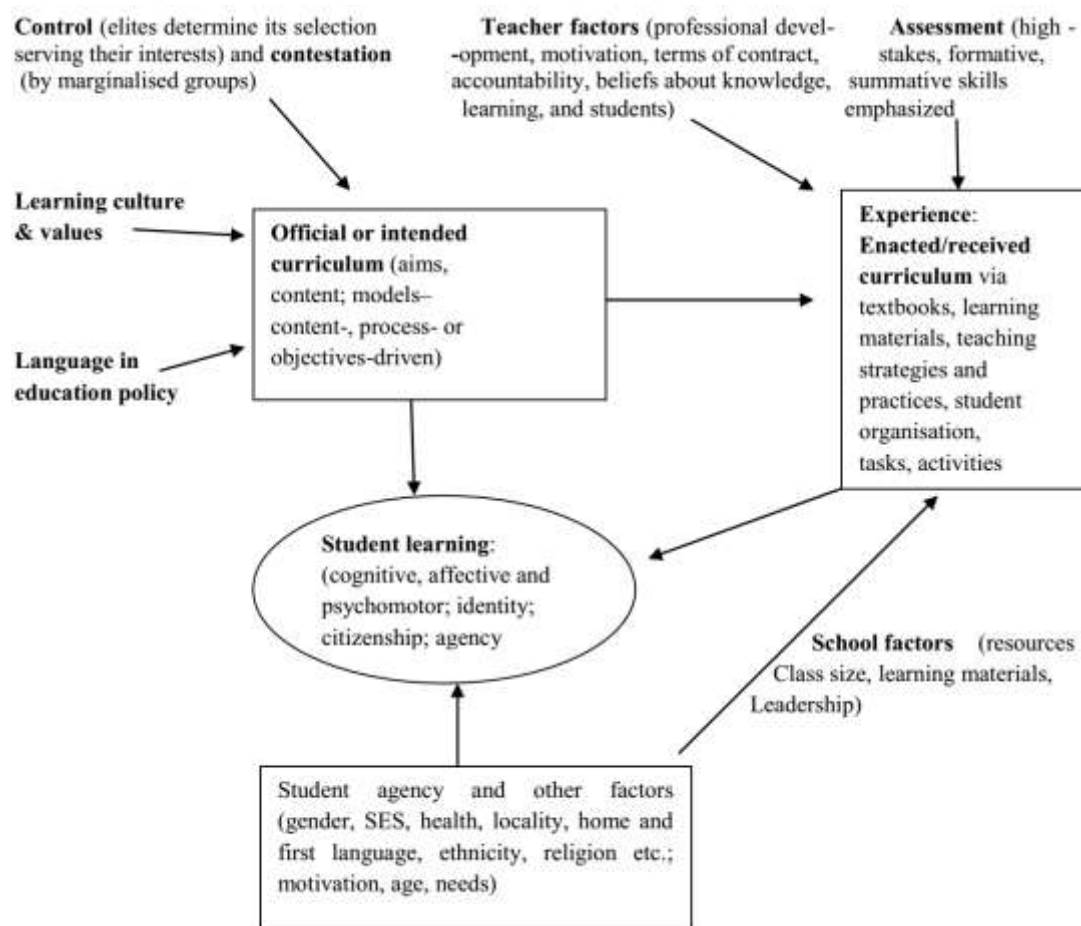
The second context is built around the role of the curriculum and teacher education in trying to shape

educational practice. This has come in the manner of how the discourse on education has been enacted and embodied in a number of developed countries. The focus is now on teacher education as a problem of ‘learning<sup>xii</sup>’ as opposed to its being one of ‘training’ in the 1960s & 1970s [34]. The full force of this shift is that “the pedagogic enterprise is to teach to test and the central thrust of pedagogic practice is one of control and outcomes” [34].

The greatest disservice to teacher education in South Sudan in terms of school outcomes has been the unfortunate disconnect between the school curriculum and teacher education curriculum. Teacher education curriculum thinking should be in tandem with existing school education curriculum so that it can continuously realign with the dictates of the official statement of valid knowledge. In schools and classrooms across the country, “instruction is overwhelmingly teacher-centred; classroom management is the teacher’s top priority; traditional school subjects dominate the curriculum; textbooks and teacher talk are the primary means of delivering the curriculum; learning consists of recalling what texts and teachers say; and tests measure how much of this students have learned” [31].

The South Sudan National School Curriculum Framework of 2014 is the first of its kind on the block and should be commended as such. However, it has not triggered an equally needed new curriculum framework for teacher education that should take stock of the new aims for a democratic, pluralistic, representative model of school education. The current teacher education programmes in the country’s Public Universities have not been updated for more than 25 years! These programmes have not adequately taken stock of paradigmatic shifts in terms of “constructivist learning, learner-centred [ness] and integrating technology into the processes of teaching and learning<sup>xiii</sup>” [5]. No wonder, hundreds of teachers have graduated but missed out on the modern eclectic, holistic and integrated restructuring of teacher education in a manner that progressively embraces a liberal view of the student teacher as a reflective practitioner and his/her learner as a constructor.

Instead, more often than not emphasis is laid on school “outcomes” devoid of quality. For example, ill-equipped teachers traverse the terrain of their career focusing on shortcuts such as overemphasizing “content delivery, examination and certification over real learning” [5]. Even private Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) have failed in this respect, too. The irony of it is not lost on anyone who knows that these institutions are supposed to equip pre- and in-service teachers with professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate others in general or specialized subjects, as well as engaging in wider educational leadership.



**Fig-2: A Framework for Understanding the Official & Enacted Curriculum**  
Westbrook *et al.*, [35]

A clear way of developing a national framework for teacher standards is to state what good teachers effectively know, do and value. Hammerness [36] examined the relationship between teacher education programme visions and teacher's visions and identified three aspects that are critical to a good programme vision:

- “A vision of *service* (which sees teaching as only one of many opportunities to give back to society);
- A vision of *social justice* (which sees teaching as a direct means of addressing social inequities);
- A vision of *practice* (which sees teaching as a profession that has a knowledge base and a set of practices that can be learned and developed over time)” [36].

Thus, three themes that should underlie the construction of South Sudan's Teacher Persona are Service, Justice & Practice. These themes should be reflected in the teacher education programmes of South Sudan's Public Universities in terms of programme pathways, admissions, course content, delivery & pedagogy, and field experience and practicum.

At present, the main *programme pathway* characterising the enterprise of initial teacher education

in South Sudan is the solo degree model. The solo model provides professional course components together with academic or subject-specific areas of study using solely contact mode. The qualification for this model is awarded on a combination of university exams, continuous assessment and successful completion of internship. There are three core curriculum areas that are integrated in these teacher education programme model: subject area aspects & methodologies, pedagogical aspects, and teaching practice and supervision [37].

Basic requirement for *admission* is possession of a senior school certificate. Secondary teachers are required to hold a Bachelor's Degree in Education (B.Ed). The existing teacher education model in South Sudan's Public Universities in terms of *course organization* is built around the continental model which is a liberal descent of programming with sub-disciplines of Education, such as Philosophy of Education, History of Education, Educational Psychology and Sociology of Education. The greatest weakness of South Sudan's continental model of liberal content structure is that the content of teacher education programmes is not built around the content of school education which should be derived from the national

curriculum framework for the country. The choice of curriculum informs what is supposed to happen in schools as opposed to what actually does happen [38].

Another critical point with regard to the curriculum content of teacher education programmes in the universities is that it lacks a renewed focus because of being categorically outmoded. Nobody knows for sure if the curriculum content promotes “narrow or wide interpretations of learning aims, or a reproductive or productive focus on knowledge” [24].

In terms of *delivery and pedagogy*, teaching styles range from lectures, group work, teaching practice, internship, and self-study. Certification is in the form of written exams, school practice reports, or projects. But there is little scope for active collaborative work imbued with research to crystallize concepts, ideas and sentiments. *School internship* covers selected subjects to be taught and a maximum period of 45 days. But it does not normally include a longer duration of observing a regular teacher in the classroom or classroom-based research projects; nor does school experience run alongside the theory courses to ensure fusion as teaching happens simultaneously at college and at school.

Overall, the didactic relations<sup>xiv</sup> are weak in the country’s teacher education enterprise. This is further compounded by a sharp segmentation of the respective stages of training ranging from academic teacher education, teacher induction to further professional development [39].

That said, the Government should do well to treat teacher development as a continuum; and in this respect, set up a nodal body under the Ministry, say National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) or National Teacher Training Agency (NTTA), to develop and implement teacher education policies across South Sudan<sup>xv</sup>. A nodal body of this kind will offer the unparalleled advantage of an improved knowledge base to support teacher policy which the Ministry lacks at present. As a resource of expertise, it can accentuate paradigm shifts in teacher education; articulate a national vision for teacher education; create teacher profiles; accredit teacher education programmes (TEPs); build professional development into the teaching career; and most importantly engage teacher educators and teachers in policy formulation and execution [10]. A nodal body, thus, will do justice to the scope of work to promote the teaching profession at the entry, mid-point and terminal stage. In short, it will garner greater amount of trust and control in relation to government regulations on teacher education.

But the Government must navigate the waters of teacher education with caution so that it does not rush to prove a point and end up making its teacher education programmes a crowded quarters as school

curricula are often. And when change happens like that, “it can appear to be piecemeal and disconnected ...Innovations are introduced before previous ones are adequately implemented and teacher education programmes are often subjected to seemingly endless tinkering” [40].

## CONCLUSION

This paper has problematised the ideological underpinnings and theoretical conceptions, or lack thereof, of teacher education in the education system of the Republic of South Sudan. Two points are noteworthy in summing up the drift of the argument in the main text. First, the teaching profession, including viable definitions of teacher character or excellence, are influenced by political and institutional expectations of the teacher which are in turn informed and constrained by the prevailing policy discourse on the nature of anticipated change in South Sudan’s education system. Second, South Sudan must seek out its own teacher education model with the right amalgamation of factors based on its professional traditions and national requirements while expecting globalization to bite at the local level.

The next leap of faith for South Sudan is to *formalize* the goals, values and programmes of teacher education on a solid footing of a system-wide and career-long professional development for its school teachers. In that lies the promise to place premium in the country’s education system.

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<sup>i</sup> This is South Sudan's highest executive organ that approves national policies and strategies.

<sup>ii</sup> That means situating teacher education within social structures, purposes and values; understanding that different narratives are used to enlist support for particular views about teacher education; and appreciating the fact that the outcome of what works best in teacher education is often a negotiated deal of values at conflict about the purpose, role and content of schooling itself (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

<sup>iii</sup> This is "an academic unit within a university where faculty members prepare teachers, prepare researchers and carry out educational research" (Labaree, 2005:276-7).

<sup>iv</sup> "It is focused on the full development of the individual and considers the cultural, social and economic, ethical and civic dimensions of education" (Daviet, 2016: 2).

<sup>v</sup> Teacher education programme refers to the structure, content and process by which a person attains education or training in an institution of learning in order to become a teacher.

<sup>vi</sup> "In general terms, paternalism refers to 'government as by a benign parent'. ...As a political principle, it applies power or authority which is conducted in order to protect or reduce the damage" (Thomas & Buckmaster, 2010: 2; Gjorshoski, 2016: 76).

<sup>vii</sup> "The goal of teacher education in Nigeria includes, among others, the encouragement of the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers and providing them with the intellectual and professional background that will be adequate for their assignments and also make them adaptable to changing situations" (Adeosun, 2016: 103).

<sup>viii</sup> "Professionalization is a process in which a professional group pursues, develops, acquires and maintains more characteristics of a profession. By contrast, "professionalism is the conduct, demeanour

and standards which guide the work of professionals" (Snoek, 2009: 3).

<sup>ix</sup> This discourse emphasizes "efficiency and effectiveness using techniques and values appropriated from the business sector" (Tuinamuna, 2011:77).

<sup>x</sup> Progressivism means "basing instruction on the needs, interests and developmental stage of the child; it means teaching students the skills they need in order to learn any subject, instead of focusing on transmitting a particular subject; it means promoting discovery and self-directed learning by the student through active engagement; it means having students work on projects that express purposes and that integrate the disciplines around socially relevant themes; and it means promoting values of community, cooperation, tolerance, justice, and democratic equality.....There is a single label that captures this entire approach to education: constructivism" (Labaree, 2005: 277).

<sup>xi</sup> "Education reforms since the 1980s in economically developed countries were driven by the demands of a highly skilled workforce in the context of free market economies" (Batra, 2011:138).

<sup>xii</sup> "Although policy-makers recognise the importance of the wider aims of education, economic gains from education are seen to be primary; and education is seen to be central to the reconstruction of the nation-state in a globalised world" (Batra, 2011:138).

<sup>xiii</sup> They are "solidly in the progressive camp ideologically, but ...have no ability to promote progressive practices in the schools. In fact, [they] do not even practice progressivism in [their] own work, as seen in the way [they] carry out research and the way [they] train teachers" (Labaree, 2005: 278).

<sup>xiv</sup> These are "the relations between fundamental educational concepts: pupils' learning resources and needs, pedagogical framework conditions and scope, educational aims, goals, subject matter and content, teaching and learning methods, and forms of assessment" (Hiim, 2011: 20).

<sup>xv</sup> The problem with this proposal is that Teacher Education is a multi-Ministry jurisdiction in South Sudan